

News Release



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MSHA fatality prevention program will include outreach, enforcement ***'Rules to Live By' targets most often cited standards in fatal accident investigations***

ARLINGTON, Va. – The U.S. Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) today announced it has launched a new outreach and enforcement program designed to strengthen efforts to prevent mining fatalities. "Rules to Live By" will spotlight the safety and health standards most frequently cited during fatal accident investigations through outreach efforts with the mining industry and focused enforcement by federal mine inspectors. MSHA formally will kick off the initiative Feb. 11 in Austin, Texas, and Feb. 12 in Charleston, W.Va.

"While the mining community marked a record-low number of mining deaths last year and has seen a significant decline in fatal mining accidents during the past 10 years, too many miners still lose their lives in preventable accidents," said Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis. "MSHA and its stakeholders must remain committed to working together toward the ultimate goal of zero mining fatalities."

Over the past several months, MSHA conducted an analysis of the 589 mining fatalities that occurred from 2000 to 2008. The analysis identified the most common conditions and practices that contributed to mining deaths, as well as the most common violations of safety standards and root causes associated with these fatal accidents. As a result of that analysis, the agency identified 11 coal and 13 metal/nonmetal safety and health standards frequently cited in fatal accident investigations and grouped them into nine accident categories: falls from elevation, falls of roof and rib, operating mobile equipment (surface and underground), maintenance, lock and tag out, blocking against motion, and struck-by mobile equipment (surface and underground).

During the nine-year period, the highest number of coal mine fatalities occurred in West Virginia (94), followed by Kentucky (78). The highest number of metal/nonmetal mine fatalities occurred in Nevada (26), followed by Texas (21).

The fatality prevention initiative will roll out in two phases: industry outreach and focused inspections. During the first phase, MSHA will disseminate information detailing the causes of the targeted fatal accidents to every mine operator, labor organization and state training grantee, as well as other stakeholders. The MSHA Web site will provide compliance assistance materials such as engineering suggestions, packages of safety target materials and other information to ensure that mine operators and miners have the necessary resources to address and eliminate workplace hazards.

In mid-March, MSHA will begin focused inspections by paying special attention to violations of the 24 standards and reminding mine inspectors to carefully evaluate gravity and negligence – consistent with the seriousness of the violation – when citing violations of the standards that have tended to cause or contribute to mining fatalities. All mine inspectors will receive online training on inspector laptop applications specific to this initiative, enforcement summaries and inspector tip sheets.

"With the full support of the mining industry, 'Rules to Live By' should make great strides in preventing fatal accidents," said Joseph A. Main, assistant secretary of labor for mine safety and health.

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